FCS06 - SOP for Casework Documentation, Writing Reports, and Reviewing Reports

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1. Scope

1.1. These practices apply to analysts within the Forensic Chemistry Unit who perform casework, write reports, and provide technical and administrative reviews of data that will be submitted externally or performed as internal validations, as well as any externally provided conclusions or administrative reviews of analytical reports.

2. Background

2.1. To establish practices within the Forensic Chemistry Unit (FCU) of the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) Division in the Washington, D.C., Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) for casework documentation, writing reports, and reviewing reports. Reports include *Report of Examination* / *Amended Report of Analysis* / *Supplemental Report of Examination* or other results to be submitted to an external contributor or for purposes of a Proficiency Test. This is in conformance to the *FCS02 – SOP for General Laboratory Procedures for FCU* and the FCU *Quality Assurance Manual*.

3. Safety

3.1. Personnel should refer to the appropriate SDS for solvents and reagents used during analysis for any specific safety requirements. For a complete review of required Health and Safety regulations of the FSL, see the *DFS Health and Safety Manual*.

4. Materials Required

4.1. Not applicable.

5. Standards and Controls

5.1. Not Applicable.

6. Calibration

6.1. Not Applicable.

7. Procedures

7.1. Casework Documentation

7.1.1. Documentation shall contain sufficient information to allow a peer to evaluate case notes and interpret the data.

7.1.2. Evidence handling documentation shall include chain of custody, information regarding packaging of the evidence upon receipt, the initial weight/count of evidence to be examined (upon opening), a description of the evidence and communications regarding the case.

7.1.3. Analytical documentation should include procedures, standards, blanks, observations, test results and supporting documentation including charts, graphs, photos, and spectra generated during an analysis.

7.1.4. Lot/Batch numbers of critical reagents used during a test shall be documented in the case notes. Routine solvents and corresponding batch information will be retained in an accessible logbook.

7.1.5. Casework documentation shall be preserved in an electronic format in a controlled shared drive.

7.2. Writing Reports

7.2.1. Reports issued by laboratories shall be accurate, clear, and objective. These reports shall include the following information:

7.2.1.1. Title of report (Report of Examination, Amended Report of Examination, or Supplemental Report of Examination).

7.2.1.2. Identity and location of the testing laboratory

7.2.1.3. Unique case identifier (on each page)

7.2.1.4. Clear identification of the end of the report (e.g., Page 3 of 3)

7.2.1.5. Submitting agency

7.2.1.6. Analysis start date and report date

7.2.1.7. Descriptive list of submitted evidence

7.2.1.8. Identity and signature (or electronic equivalent) of analyst

7.2.1.9. Results / conclusions

7.2.1.10. A list of analytical techniques employed

7.2.1.11. Sampling

7.2.1.12. Uncertainty (if applicable to result)

7.2.2. If elements listed above are not included on the report, the laboratory shall have documented reasons (i.e., specific accreditation, customer or jurisdictional considerations), for not doing so.

7.2.3. **Note:** If in extraordinary cases when circumstances of the case and analytical processes used are fully documented but where methods are employed without prior performance verification, the report shall explicitly state that the test result is not obtained through the use of a validated procedure.

7.2.4. **Note:** Analysis start date is defined as the date the chemist opens the item of evidence and begins technical analysis. Analysis end date is defined as the date the chemist completes the technical analysis. Report date is defined as the date the chemist submits the report for technical review. If technical or administrative review requires edits, the report date will be updated to reflect the newest submission. Issue date is defined by the date the administrative review is completed and signed (see administrative checklist). Distribution date is defined as the date that the report is delivered to the customer.

7.2.5. If the method performed is accredited under the scope of the laboratory, then the accreditation stamp for ILAC-MRA / ANAB will be placed at the bottom of the report page

7.2.6. If a method performed is NOT accredited under the scope of the laboratory, then the accreditation stamp for ILAC-MRA / ANAB will NOT be placed at the bottom of the report page. Additionally, a comment within the Notes section will explicitly state that the method used is not accredited and for information purposes only.

7.2.7. All conclusions and opinions expressed in written or oral form shall be based on sufficient supporting evidence, data, or information, as defined

by laboratory procedures.

7.2.8. The basis of any conclusion should be completely documented in the case notes and summarized in the written report and subject to the laboratory's review policy.

7.2.9. Conclusions and opinions reported shall be accurate and clear enough so that other laboratory testing personnel can understand and replicate them.

7.2.10. The scope of opinions and conclusions reported, in either written or oral form, shall not go beyond the knowledge, training and experience of the analyst.

7.2.11. Supplemental Reports:

7.2.11.1. When additional evidence is received for analysis after the original report has been released, a supplemental laboratory report will be issued and will be marked with the word "Supplemental" and read in the title "Supplemental". Additionally, a note will be added to the report to include a reference to the original and/or previously released report(s).

7.2.12. Amended Reports:

7.2.12.1. Once a Report of Examination / Supplemental Report of Examination has been issued, the laboratory will represent any required material amendments in the form of an Amended Report of Examination / Amended Supplemental Report of Examination.

7.2.12.2. The word "Amended" is added to the title of the report / notification.

7.2.12.3. The reason why the report is amended will be described within the notes block of the Amended Report of Examination / Amended Supplemental Report of Examination.

7.2.12.4. The date on all pages of the Amended Report of Examination / Amended Supplemental Report of Examination will reflect the date of the amended report / notification.

7.2.12.5. The amended report / notification will be reviewed.

7.2.13. Review Packet

7.2.13.1. A Review packet shall consist of the following items, as appropriate (typically in this order):

7.2.13.1.1. The FCU report

7.2.13.1.2. Technical data of reference standards used

7.2.13.1.3. The chemist's drug worksheet

7.2.13.1.4. Technical data from the case, to include results from all tests performed (i.e., pharmaceutical identification, instrumental data)

7.2.13.1.5. DEA-7 forms, or property forms

7.2.13.1.6. The original request for analysis

7.2.13.1.7. Other supporting documentation as applicable

7.2.13.1.8. The case's activity communication log, unless it is accessible during the Discovery process from the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)

7.2.13.1.9. PDF versions of case communication emails, or equivalent

7.2.13.1.10. FCU Review Checklist

7.2.13.2. Each technical page shall include the initials or signature of the Chemist who performed the test

7.2.14. Discontinuation of Analysis Reports

7.2.14.1. When a request has been cancelled for any reason after analysis has already begun, a Discontinuation of Analysis report will be issued as per FSL *LOM01 – Procedures for the Examination of Evidence.*

7.3. Technical and Administrative Review

7.3.1. General Requirements

7.3.1.1. After completion of an analysis and prior to sample or evidence return or destruction and prior to submitting the results to the Customer, all analytical reports with the corresponding review packet are to be technically and administratively reviewed by qualified personnel. The technical report and supporting documentation (notes, charts, photographs, etc.) shall undergo a Technical Review to ensure that the conclusions are supported and documented by the data.

7.3.1.2. Each identification, conclusion and/or association shall be confirmed by a review of the data by a Technical Reviewer.

7.3.1.3. All Report of Examination / Amended Report of Analysis / Supplemental Report of Examination and review packets sent to a Customer shall undergo a Technical Review prior to an

Administrative Review.

7.3.1.4. All Report of Examination / Amended Report of Analysis / Supplemental Report of Examination and review packets shall undergo an Administrative Review prior to being submitted to the Customer.

7.3.1.5. It is preferred that technical and administrative reviews are performed by different individuals, however, they may both be performed by the same person if qualified to do so.

7.3.2. Technical Review

7.3.2.1. The Technical Reviewer shall:

7.3.2.1.1. Be an employee or contract employee currently qualified in the methodology being reviewed. The Technical Review must be performed by an individual who is competent to perform case analysis for FCU.

7.3.2.1.2. Not be the originator of the analysis being reviewed.

7.3.2.2. The Technical Review shall ensure:

7.3.2.2.1. The appropriate analyses have been performed,

7.3.2.2.2. The accuracy of the analyst's calculations (when appropriate),

7.3.2.2.3. Conclusions, identifications and/or associations are documented

7.3.2.2.4. The analyst's conclusions / critical findings are supported in the technical records, consistent with the documented data, and within the scope of the discipline and applicable SOPs,

7.3.2.2.5. There is sufficient supporting documentation such that another qualified analyst other than the one who performed the analysis would come to the same conclusion under similar conditions

7.3.2.2.6. Upon completion of the Technical Review, the Technical Reviewer shall document the review by signing and dating the Technical Review Form (Document Control Number 7414) and forward the report to the individual performing the Administrative Review.

7.3.3. Administrative Review

7.3.3.1. The Administrative Reviewer shall:

7.3.3.1.1. Be an employee or contract employee

7.3.3.1.2. Note: The individual performing the Administrative Review does not need to be competent in performing case analysis for FCU.

7.3.3.1.3. Not be the originator of the analysis being reviewed

7.3.3.2. An Administrative Review shall ensure:

7.3.3.2.1. The report is clear, concise, accurate and complete.

7.3.3.2.2. All records are free of spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.

7.3.3.2.3. The Report of Examination / Amended Report of Analysis / Supplemental Report of Examination conforms to FCU quality practices.

7.3.3.2.4. A Technical Review has been completed and documented.

7.3.3.2.5. All data transfers that occur that are not part of a validated electronic process are checked.

7.3.3.2.6. Upon completion of the Administrative Review, the Reviewer shall document the review by signing and dating the Administrative Review Form (Document Control Number 7414).

7.3.4. Conflict Resolution

7.3.4.1. Discrepancies identified during the review process shall be discussed between the reporting analyst and reviewer. There may be instances when the reviewer and individual who performed the analysis cannot resolve significant differences in results obtained or conclusions drawn prior to issuing the final report. If, after discussion and review, the disagreement still remains, the problem will be forwarded to the Technical Leader/Unit Manager. The Technical Leader/Unit Manager will review the case and proceed as required.

7.3.4.2. This discrepancy and resolution will be documented in the case report or in the LIMS Case Activities.

7.3.4.3. The final decision of the Technical Leader/Unit Manager will stand as the final conclusion for the case, and the final report. The analyst issuing the final report will be responsible for

adhering to such decisions when reporting/testifying in accordance with said decisions.

7.4. Case Send-Out

7.4.1. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Case Send-Out

7.4.1.1. The FCU report for MPD-submitted cases will be sent to the MPD general reporting email (cid_evidence.reports@dc.gov) and a copy will be placed in the USAO shared drive.

7.4.2. Other Agency Case Send-Out

7.4.2.1. Other agencies must establish points of contact for the agency and must specify who will receive reports.

7.4.2.2. FCU Reports will be sent out to the agency points of contact.

7.4.3. Supplemental case information may be provided upon agency request and approval from the FCU Unit Manager

8. Sampling

8.1. Not applicable

9. Calculations

9.1. Not applicable

10. Uncertainty of Measurement

10.1. When quantitative results are obtained, and the significance of the value may impact the report, the uncertainty of measurement must be determined.

11. Limitations

11.1. These practices pertain solely to the FCU laboratory.

12. Documentation

12.1. Controlled Dangerous Substances Worksheet

12.2. Technical data relating to all analyses

12.3. Report of Examination / Amended Report of Analysis / Supplemental Report of Examination/ Discontinuation of Analysis, as applicable

12.4. Technical and Administrative Review Form (Document Control Number 7414)

13. References

13.1. FCU *Quality Assurance Manual*, (current version)

13.2. FCU Method SOPs, (current revisions).

13.3. FSL *LOM01 – Procedures for the Examination of Evidence* (current revision)